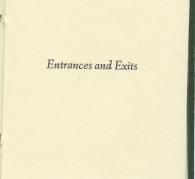
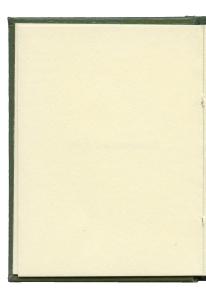


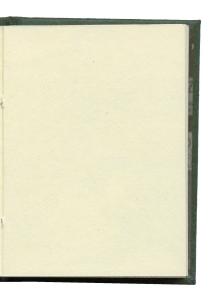


END-SHEET Opera House, Butler, Ohio











ENTRANCES

and EXITS

Recollections of Ohio Theater

BY HAROLD E. McCUEN



THE BLACK CAT PRESS Skokie, Illinois

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Hal and Friends





SINCE THE DAY after its beginning, the theatre and its actors and actresses have been praised for their past, condemned for their present and commiserated for their future. In the days of Sarah Siddons, Fanny Kemble and David Garrick, it was vehemently asserted that there never was such theatrel William Charles Macready was belittled his fame, and Edwin Booth was declared a flickering candle compared with the

sunburst of Edwin Forrest's glory. The same could be said of the Kembles, the Keans, The Divine Sarah, Eleanore Duse, Rejane, the Drews, Maude Adams and the Barrymores. Idolized by the hero-worshippers, they cry, "When shall we look upon their like again?"

But history has a way of repeating itself with new plays, new stars and new ideals for and in the theatre.

11

THEATRE in Mansfield, other towns in Richland County and the State of Ohio has a history worthy of the stage! Ohio's first theatrical venMONDAY, JUNE 26TH, 1882.

MR. EDWIN BOOTH

RICHELIEU

Cardinal Richelien Louis XIII. Gaston, Duc d'Orleans Baradas Adrian de Mauprat De Beringhen -Clermont -Joseph Huguet François First Secretary Second Secretary Third Secretary Captain of the Guard Julie de Mortemar -Marion de Lorme

Mr. BOWIN BOOTH
Mr. J. G. SHORE
Mr. SAML, FISHER
Mr. E. H. BROOKE
Mr. EBEN, PLYMPTON
Mr. IN RAYTHEY
Mr. ROBT, PATEMAN
Mr. DOWARD PRICE
Mr. YULLIAM YOUNGE
Mr. J. F. MELLISH
Mr. J. RYENSLEY
Mr. ARTHUR GLIMONE

Mr. D. DANIEL Miss BELLA PATEMA Miss ELLEN MEYRIC

UNDER THE MANAGEMENT OF MR. WYNN MILLER.

Stage Manager
Assistant Stage Manager
Scenic Artist

Mr. Robt. Patrian Mr. B. S. Parkes Mr. Chas. Brooks

Anrniture & Mpholatery by Messes. White, Minter & Co.

ture, a rollicking musical comedy or burletta, The Poor Soldier, was performed in Cincinnati on October 1, 1801, in a large shed attached to Fort Washington where many of the players were stationed. The play was written by John O'Keefe, with music by William Shield, and brought from England to this country in 1786.

Mansfield, Ohio, has been known as a leading showtown from the hurly-burly days of 1824 to the world premiere in 1939 of the movie, The Rains Came by Mansfield author Louis Bromfield. Although historians tell us the pioneer families were too busy clearing the wilderness, building homes for new settlers and fighting

Indians to go to shows, they did have some entertainment, according to the Mansfield Gazette of March 4, 1824.

The Melodeon Hall was built in 1873 on South Main Street opposite the Southern Hotel. Sturges and Bigelow Hall opened in January, 1877, on the southeast corner of Third and Main Streets. Miller's Opera House was opened in 1878 and was known as Upstairs Opera because the auditorium was on the third floor. The contitions there became unsatisfactory; so by 1879, the civic-minded residents were promoting the construction of a new building. The voters solved the problem by voting a bond issue to build a memorial at 34 Park Avenue



West to honor the soldiers and sailors of all wars. The Memorial Opera House then housed the greatest!

Several other towns in Richland County had their own opera houses for entertainments and serving as the meeting places of the community. Butler, with a population of 800, had an opera house drawing 2,000 people.

111

RAILROAD transportation enabled traveling actors to visit both small and large towns. Road companies visited the Memorial Opera House two or three times a week in the winter and spring. The great Sarah Bernhardt

played there. Like royalty, she was a presence and her public felt she belonged to them. To many, she was The Divine Sarah, no exaggeration for there was something of the goddess about her.

Paris-born Bernhardt (1844-1923) was on one of her many farewell tours in 1910 when she played Mansfield in repertoire, starring with Coquelin in L'Aiglon, La Tosca, La Dame aux Camelias, Jeanne d'Arc and Merchant of Venice. Not content with playing eight performances a week, this 66-year-old actress decided to put on some extra "matinees classique." The age discrepancy between actress and character wasn't noticed. Even when

she was much older and minus a leg, that latter miracle of St. Joan took place, shedding on the audience its warmth and radiance.

I have Bernhardt's Birthday Book listing her many roles, and a very old recording of her reading a scene from Elizabeth, the Queen. Eyen with scratches and acoustical sounds, the voice is there with all its magic.

IV

FROM 1850 to 1905, the interaction between theatre and American society was vigorous. Audiences responded to such legendary figures as Joseph Jefferson, who opened the Memorial



Opera House in Rip Van Winkle, Junius Brutus Booth and Lillian Russell, known affectionately as The American Beauty. The popular English actress and wit, Mrs. Pat Campbell, made her first Mansfield appearance in January, 1902, in repertoire, including The Second Mrs. Tanqueray and Pelleas and Melisande with George Arliss. She brought George Bernard Shaw's Pygmalion to us in 1916. She was My Fair Lady before Lerner and Lowe added music.

Dame Ellen Terry (I have her Birthday Book too!) and Sir Henry Irving graced the Opera House Stage during several farewell tours. Their forte, Shakespeare. James O'Neill, father of playwright Eugene O'Neill, toured in 5,000 performances as *The Count of Monte Cristo*, and Edwin Booth had an eight-month Ohio tour of 72 cities, doing 258 performances, 48 of which were one-night stands. Walter Hampden farewelled forever, or so it seemed, as Cyrano de Bergerac.

Ohio-born Clara Norris was a leading emotional actress of the day and a great favorite. The entire country lost its heart to her and Lotta Crabtree, Fanny Davenport, Kate Claxton and Annie Russell. And almost lost its innocence as an apparently nude Adah Menken rode her horse offstage in Mazeppal

In 1900, the theatre was in a

healthy state and the star system was flourishing. It was the height of the great American road show era with 339 touring companies crisscrossing Ohio, bringing Hamlet, The Black Crook and Richard III to every town that could be reached by rail. Even very small towns could and did support an opera house. There was no shortage of actors willing and able to endure the hazards and discomforts of the road. There were, in fact, 20,000 of them.

The paramount influence on the theatre of the world has been Shake-speare. This master's touch has had an extraordinary and far—reaching effect on the English-speaking stage, and



such judgment as has been passed on the old-time actors is based on the quality of their work in Shakespearean drama. Julia Marlowe and E. H. Sothern joined forces and as a team presented Shakespeare in repertoire the rest of their stage days. The standards of the audiences of early theatre in Mansfield, Ohio cannot be held in contempt for they not only expected, they got the best!

V

UNCERTAIN patronage made theatre a doubtful financial venture in the early days. Many opposed it on religious or moral grounds. Criticism was aimed at other aspects too. People objected to the noisy, rude and rabblesome boys in the gallery; but the taboos were overcome and entertainment was in the flesh.

In the 1910-11 season, Mansfielders welcomed such notables as David Warfield in The Music Master and Mrs. Leslie Carter in ZaZa and Vesta Herne and Billie Burke in Mrs. Dot. The great Jane Cowl appeared in the nostalgic Smilin' Through with Henry Stephenson. Other traveling stars headlining theatre bills that season were Marie Dressler, May Robson, Anna Held, Minnie Maddern Fiske, Lily Langtry, Mojeska, Edwin Forrest and Richard Mansfield with

an all-star cast in The Rivals, an all-time favorite.

The 1912-13 theatrical season was important all the way from Broadway to Mansfield. In New York, lovely Laurette Taylor opened in Peg o' My Heart, a sentimental confection whipped up by her husband, J. Hartley Manners. Elsie Janis of Columbus, before she became the Sweetheart of the A.E.F., was dancing with Montgomery and Stone in Lady of the Slipper. Maude Adams was asking audiences of Peter Pan if they believed in fairies. They did!

That same year, William Faversham was playing Caesar. Mme. Alla Nazimova was emoting violently and



John Drew was bringing us dignity and thespian dreams.

Sandusky, Ohio, natives, Daniel, Charles and Gustave Frohman, were managers and producers of many stars and productions of the late Nineteenth Century and early Twentieth Century. They knew theatre and audiences. "Charles Frohman Presents" and "Daniel Frohman Presents" became hallmarks. The stock companies rose to their highest peaks with Daniel Frohman's Lyceum and the star system reached a pinnacle under Charles Frohman. Charles was a victim of the 1915 Lusitania disaster. His final words were from Barrie's Peter Pan (which he produced as a vehicle for

his glowing star, Maude Adams):
"Why fear death? It is the most beautiful adventure in life."

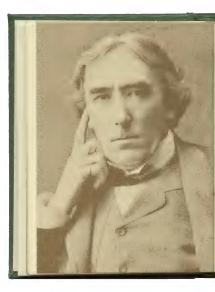
VI

WHEREVER there is theatre, music is as significant as the spoken drama. From its beginning, song and dance found a place. Blackface minstrelsy, America's single unique contribution to entertainment, was devised by Daniel Decatur Emmett, an Ohio man from Mt. Vernon, in December of 1842. Violinist Emmett and his friends, a banjoist and a manipulator of bones and tambourines (thus, end men Bones and Tambo) presented a

full evening of songs, dances and stories in blackface. This led to the forming of the first minstrel show. Emmett planned the circle and originated the costumes and blackface that became traditional.

Dan Emmett, composer of many minstrel numbers, is best remembered for "Dixie," the plantation walkaround that became the song of the embattled Southerners.

Ohio has had many famous minstrel kings and companies, including Al G. Field's Troupers who made a yearly trek to our town from Columbus, as did Woodruff, Hamilton and Foster. Cincinnati listed William Henry Rice and Company, Ned



Reed, B. C. Hart and Fagen's Minstrels, all well-known groups. The list of single performers is never ending. Bert Williams is, perhaps, the best loved and best remembered for his rendition of the minstrel favorite, "Nobody," revived a few years ago by Perry Como.

The Frohman Brothers owned Collendar's Colored Minstrels and originated the slogan, "40 Count'em 40," throughout the country.

The noon parade was the opening wedge with which a traveling company burst upon the quiet life of our town. Minstrels and "Uncle Tommers" offered the best display. Following the band were the minstrels,

two by two, stretched out to make the line more impressive, with small boys at intervals, carrying signs announcing the virtues of the evening performance. (I'm sure I was there!)

The parade uniform was a top hat, a long gaudy coat and a cane. The trousers and shoes did not matter so much but canes were indispensable. The canes set the tempo, marked the step of measured swing to avoid a procession of stragglers, while the band, with plenty of slides from the trombones, blared "Lasses Trombone." (Oh, yes. We got in free.)

OF ALL THE PLAYS that came back year after year, never to lose their appeal, East Lynne topped them all. This sensational drama dealt with Lady Isabel, married to Archibald Carlyle, who believed her unfaithful, while she suspected him. She eloped with Sir Francis Levison, leaving Little Willie with her husband. This was high society in action! Deserted after eight years, Isabel returned home, wearing goggles. No one recognized her.

As Little Willie nears death, Lady Isabel leaned over the crib crying, "Willie, don't you know your mother?" And Willie, viewing her face without goggles, cried, "Mama," and promptly died. She solved the matrimonial triangle by dying too. All this to the strains of "Then You'll Remember Me" and femining sniffles!

The Casino Theatre in North Lake Park was most popular from 1901 to 1920. Louis Bromfield in his novel, "The Farm," describes how the Baltimore and Ohio freight trains puffed past, making so much noise that an intermission was called in East Lynne until things quieted down. This theatre had to drop the curtain at 9:45 nightly because the last street car ran at 10:30. If the show wasn't long enough, the stage



manager and audiences complained. If it was too long, the streetcar super-intendent and conductor stormed. They knew another car would be needed for the last load.

We read again Tomorrow Night East Lynne when the play was revived by the Mansfield Community Players February 12 and 13, 1952. I played the heavy lead, Sir Francis Levison, and was hiss-ss-ed into becoming the recipient of the Helen Bacon Best Performance Award that season! For East Lynne and for the role of Stephen Gaye in Accent on Youth. Bravo for me!

THE POPULARITY of Uncle Tom's Cahin reflected the state of drama in Ohio and the entire North. Here was melodrama, pathos, humor, sentimentality, villainy and heroism skillfully blended. However, its cultural impact is uncertain since audiences wanted only to be entertained. At the Memorial Opera House, this play was a yearly looked-forward-to event for 10, 20 and 30 cents, complete with big street parades to drum up business, featuring bands, Little Eva on her pony, Eliza, Legree and bloodhounds. At one time, seven companies of Uncle Tom's Cabin



toured Ohio every winter until spring.

There are no Uncle Tom shows now, and that strange breed of actors known as "Uncle Tommers" has faded from the scene. They were not actors in the general sense. They knew little of and cared less for the finer phases of Shakespeare. An "Uncle Tommer" never played anything else. A girl started as Little Eva then graduated into Topsy. When the demands of this part became too exacting, she might become Eliza or Mrs. St. Clair or Aunt Ophelia or Casey, depending upon physique, countenance or temperament.

Each man had to be up in several parts and double in brass. Brought up with bloodhounds, they learned their parts with their ABC's so when they came to manhood, they were promoted to the dignity of a half-dozen roles and were dyed-in-the-wool "Uncle Tompers."

Naturally, there were certain trademarks that never varied, such as Topsy's "Golly, I'se so wicked!" and Miss Ophelia's "How shiftless!" and the repetitious "I'm a lawyer and my name is Marks! Have a card!" None would ever dare to try improving upon Legree's "Tom, I've made up my mind to kill you." Finally there was Uncle Tom's declaration: "My soul ain't yours, Massa. It's been bought and paid for by One that is

able to keep it and you can't have it." The applause was deafening.

The play remained a thing quite apart from the humdrum of every day. It possessed the unreality of make-believe and like Topsy, just grew through repetition.

•-- |X ---•

FOR TEN YEARS, I've been researching The Drummer Boy of Shiloh, a military drama in five acts based on events of the Civil War. I call it "a play from our town" because I believe it was written by Mansfielder A. Frank Nail, and it was first presented in Mansfield at Miller's Opera House in 1872.



By 1928 the play had been presented here, augmented by local talent, 369 times. Old Joe in the person of Author Nail was perfect. Mrs. Nail as Mother Howard was flawless. When Nail's health failed in 1911, his son Frank U. Nail took over the important slave role of Uncle Joe and remained in the cast for more than twenty years.

It was the custom to retain only a few permanent members of the cast and to recruit the others in the towns where the play was being presented. It took considerable time, but it had the advantage of giving local thespians a chance to appear in a traveling show. (And I did too!)

When the Sons of Veterans sponsored the play in Northampton, Massachusetts, in 1912, Calvin Coolidge played Farmer Howard. He became President eleven years later.

In a letter sent to me in 1965, Attorney Efflo Plazer of Cleveland recalled a memorable performance here when the late Dr. Stoodt played The Drummer Boy. In the prison scene, when The Drummer Boy shouted for bread, the Mansfield High School Principal George Davis, Coach Harry Patton and the entire football team, occupying the first two rows, stood up and showered the stage with buns and loaves of bread. The team then included Pete Henry, who

was to become an All-American from Washington and Jefferson College.

Attorney Plazer remembered that the play's ending was so sad that everyone went out weeping quietly. I hope to see the drama presented here again one day. I'm not one of little faith for I have acquired two of the original scripts.

~ X ~~

SHOWBOATS of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers were the last of the small town entertainments to disappear. These showboats were large and small, some seating three thousand persons, others accommodating 150 to 300 chairs.



Most of the companies were family affairs and relatives did everything from handling the boat, running the theatre, performing any part or playing in the orchestra. Showboats offered not only melodramas but minstrels, vaudeville, burlesque. They offered the run-of-the-mill shows that repertory companies played on land. Ten Nights in a Barroom, East Lynne and The Drunkard were familiar to theatregoers along the rivers.

Billy Bryant, whose family was famous on the river, started in 1900. The Princess Showboat, seating 140, later 300, was built in 1907 at Point Pleasant, West Virginia. Bryant's New Showboat, built by Bryant in

1918, seated 880 for the Mississippi and Ohio system. The boat's advertising on illustrated handbills was in keeping with the atmosphere of "refinement!" A clean performance — no coarse jokes — nothing the most perfect lady will object to — a good show — a moral show.

Programs were described by such phrases as The Best Actors in the Nation, Musical Artists Galore, An Evening of Dramatic Surprises.

The Goldenrod, owned by Captain J. W. Menke, played the river towns for fifty years. Edna Ferber asked Menke's permission to visit the boat when she was writing Showboat.

"Showboat audiences were not

ashamed of reaction," wrote my friend Bruce Renaldo, a grand old showman who had directed some of the greatest actors in the business. He had acted hundreds of roles while playing on The Goldenrod, The Princess, The Water Oueen and The Sensation.

So the era of the showboat passed, as did the country theatre, and even the attempted revivals are bound to be short-lived at the best.

The late Gertrude Lawrence was especially fond of *The Goldenrod* and on her last tour gave a party on board for the cast. During the evening, she discovered that the piano player knew all the songs she had once sung in the music halls of England. "This is the



loveliest place in the world to sing the old songs," she said happily as she left *The Goldenrod*.

The list of performers who have become successful in various branches of show business is both long and impressive. But some historians had casual attitudes toward records so the names of most of the actors who played showboats in the early days have been long forgotten.

My last word from Captain Billy Bryant was about the passing of Bruce Rinaldo. It was written from Dania, Florida, on March 12, 1967. There

goes the Showboat!

CHAUTAUQUA, which took to the road in 1904, had a glamorous and footloose life. It died in 1932 (My last glorious seven days of Deluxe Redpath were in 1929. My program reads like a Blue Book of names.) under the hit-and-run wheels of a Model A Ford on the way to the movies on a newly paved road. Radio swept it into the ditch and the Wall Street crash gave it the coup de grace, so said Harry P. Harrison who told the story! He saw Chautauqua form in the first tent ever set up.

Programs were as varied as Joseph's coat of many colors. Topping the list of orators was William Jennings Bryan, who delivered his 'Prince of Peace' oration, and Calvin Coolidge, who had his audiences squirming because his address was too long. The Rev. Mr. Conwell, with is "Acres of Diamonds," was purely a sermon in the best Horatio Alger manner. From his fees and royalties, he founded Temple University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and helped many young men to attend it.

In the early days, drama was banned but finally Servant in the House, a morality play, broke the taboo. After that, it was only a step to The Ben Greet Players and to musicals with Gilbert and Sullivan's The Mikado in the lead. I never found The D'Oly Carte Company nearly as exciting as that first Mikado.

It took all kinds of music to build a Chautauqua program and all kinds of musicians to provide it: brass bands, bell ringers, harp ensembles, Swiss yodelers, soprano soloists, soberfaced choirs, male quartettes and trios offering compositions by Carrie Jacobs Bond. Most of the music was popular, though many brilliant artists traveled Redpath and offered lighter works of the great composers. Audiences flocked to hear the perennial favorites of Victor Herbert, Johann Strauss and Rudolf Friml. They knew what they wanted.



There was serious music with Metropolitan Opera contralto Mme. Ernestine Schumann-Heink holding her hearers spellbound, singing "Stille Nacht." I heard her sing it one last time at Christmas over early radio. Ne'er to be forgotten! The veterans of World War I loved her, for her sons served in that "war to end all wars."

But it was Tamaki Miura that brought beauty and splendor into my lite that season. A happy little Japanese soprano who lived to sing, she was the star for four seasons in Puccini's tragic piece, Madame Butterfly.

The tent Chautauqua satisfied a real hunger in our town for culture and innocent entertainment at reduced prices. Fifty cents admission was average, if you didn't buy a season ticket. Adult season tickets were three dollars.

XII-

JUST WHEN my interest in the theatre began is hard to say. It seems to me that I can not remember when things theatrical did not give a tug to my heartstrings, whether it was a tentwenty-thirty stock company that came to my birthplace of Butler for a week of repettory or a one-night stand in our Opera House. Yes, we did. We had an opera house!

From Conn's Official Theatrical

Guide of 1905-06, these inspiring words:

"Butler, Ohio — Pop. 800, drawing 2,000 Opera Hall. F. E. Wise (courtesy titles Uncle Floyd and Aunt Sylvia), Mgr. and Bus. Mgr. Prices 25 cents and 50 cents. Illum. elec. Width Prosc. opening 20 ft. Dist. curtain line to footlight 2 ft. Depth understage 5 ft. 1 trap, located center. Scene Rm. Theatre 2nd floor. Dr. rooms. Sosman and Landis, scenic artists: M. M. Spohn Prop. man. Newspaper — Times, weekly, Wed. Enterprise, weekly, Thurs. Hotel Wise \$1.50. Railroad: B & O RR — I. C. Bell, agent. Transfer Co. City Dray Line"

then Independence, before it was named after General Butler. My father, O. H. McCuen, owned the dray and hauled the wardrobe trunks and scenery. That's close to being born in a trunk!

One of the most vivid memories of all, of course, is the Farmers' Institute. It was a high point of the social season. Almost a week of music and lectures, including talks about all the newest methods of farming. I must have tolerated that bit of down-to-earth information!

Again this day, memories skate across pages of time. I was looking at theatre programs and photographs of players of such exquisite beauty and



mystery as well nigh takes the breath away. Whether they are really old or no longer on stage is immaterial. They connote for me the passage of time, as T. S. Eliot put it so well in the first of his Four Quartets: "Time present and time past are both, perhaps, present in time future and time future contained in time past."

I wish I had a permanent record of all the great plays, the great actors and actresses of our time, before and since.

Often I am asked by my students, interested in drama and acting, to tell them about my happenings in the theatre, something that will help them in their search for the "Holy Grail." One thing for sure, they would have an easier time understanding when I say, "You should have seen Katharine Cornell."

- XIII -

IT WAS THE 1933-34 season. It was as Juliet, one of her greatest triumphs, that I discovered her, met her backstage and fell in love with her. Katharine Cornell, one of the great actresses of the American Theatre.

Every year thereafter, for over forty years, I would meet her again backstage as Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Lucrece, Saint Joan, Candida, Antigone and a gallery of other stage portraits. To shake hands with her was a moment to remember, strong, warm, moving, knowing!

Her career through the years was a glorious page of theatrical history, creditable to herself and to Guthrie McClintic, her husband and director, and richly beneficial to the theatre itself. She lighted the stage and my life with integrity, taste and charm. One of Miss Cornell's strengths as an artist was the ability to create character. Even with a weak script, she could transform the material and create the illusion that the viewer was witnessing a memorable play.

"The first lady of the theatre," said Alexander Woolcott, and I agree!



Miss Cornell was indisputably the reigning star of the second quarter of this century, an actress without peer in emotional romantic roles and one, moreover, who took her plays to the byways of America, thereby helping to shape the country's cultural tastes.

Brooks Atkinson wrote in The New York Times, "The great ones have a little something extra. To their love of the theatre, to their intelligence and their willingness to work, they bring a personal incandescence that cannot be explained. Katharine Cornell was one of them. Something electric happened when she stepped on stage."

No doubt, her personal shyness

was part of the mystery of her acting. She was never sure that she was ready to play a part in public; but when she did step on stage as Elizabeth in *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*, the audience knew that she was ready. Those dark eyes, that haunting voice, that quiet splendor filled the stage. Revived five times, the play fixed Miss Cornell in theatregoers' minds as a romantic actress.

Her hold on her audiences was astonishing. One Christmas Day, her company was to open in Seattle with an 8:30 p.m. curtain. Floods had delayed the train which finally arrived at 11:15 p.m. The cast discovered the audience was still waiting. The

audience watched the setting up, and the curtain rose at 1:05 a.m. with Miss Cornell and her company giving the kind of performance one always hopes for and so rarely sees.

In addition to her personal magnetism, Miss Cornell was also a great lady. She respected audiences and believed that audiences of all kinds everywhere were entitled to the best.

One of the last times I was to thrill to her acting was her performance with Brian Aherne in Dear Liar, the story of Mrs. Pat Campbell and George Bernard Shaw, in Swasey Chapel on the Denison University campus in Granville, Ohio.

I had driven there late in the



afternoon, and having time on my hands, I stopped by an antique shop where I found an early toy theatre. It was not for sale. Miss Cornell, said the owner, had been in and was interested in having it. It turned out there was no room on the bus to carry a toy theatre on tour and Miss Cornell felt it too risky to ship it to New York. So I became the happy owner.

It must have been an exhausting rote for the two stars held the stage for the full evening. I decided not to intrude on Miss Cornell after the curtain call; but on leaving, I met her secretary, Miss Gertrude Macy, who said, "I am sure Kit is expecting you." And, with the same thrill that always

left me weak in the knees, we met again. All these moments and the toy theatre too. Incidentally, I have a set of bisque character dolls, dressed in the period and ready to go on stage at a moment's notice, complete with the scripts of Our American Cousin and/or The Drummer Boy of Shiloh. A remarkable small repertoire!

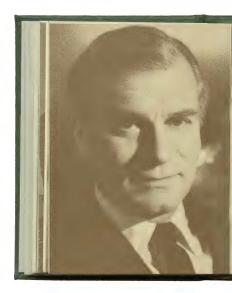
The actress and her husband were horored by a star-studded roster of guests attending the New York Public Library's reception on April 24, 1974, marking the dedication of a theatrical collection reading room as "The Katharine Cornell-Guthrie McClintic Room" of Lincoln Center.

A special exhibition of materials

was mounted for the occasion, including a tapestry of Miss Cornell as Cleopatra, an arrangement of hoods representing her honorary doctorates, framed photographs, framed letters from Eugene O'Neill, a letter from George Bernard Shaw concerning Candida and photos of Miss Cornell in various productions which Mc-Clinite directed.

I have a similar collection which I show and share with pride.

In 1970, on the 300th anniversary of the town of Tisbury in Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, the island-loving actress gave to the townsfolk a rebuilt town hall. She had expressed a wish that her ashes



be buried behind Association Hall in the 300-year-old cemetery which is sealed off. The wish was granted.

Katharine Cornell died at 81 on June 9, 1974, and a bit of "lonesome" crept in.

XIV

IN MY DAY of theatregoing, with every new season stars of calibre would shine brighter with higher ideals for the theatre. With the excitement of each memory acting like wine on my spirits, I'd say, "So this is the season when the stars seem to shine brightest of all."

First of all, I remember Lynn

Fontanne and Alfred Lunt. It was in 1924 they were having their first great success as a team with Molnar's The Guardsmen. (I could never be sure if either knew what the other one knew! It was sheer delight!) Their Taming of the Shrew was a hit in 1935. Then seeing them in Amphitryon 38 was theatre in one of its supreme moods! Then again, near the end of their glorious careers of acting together, they were superb in Robert Sherwood's moving play, There Shall Be No Night, winner of the Pulitzer Prize.

In 1935, Helen Hayes triumphed in Victoria Regina. She was every inch the Queen! Leslie Howard was equally happy in The Petrified Forest, displaying his marvelous diction. The Little Foxes by Lillian Hellman, in 1939, provided Tallulah Bankhead with one of her finest roles as Regina.

Two happenings in the 1940-41 season made theatre history. One of the memorable events was The Corn Is Green, which offered Ethel Barrymore one of her finest roles in a distinguished career. I saw it at a Saturday matinee at the Hanna Theatre.

Katharine Cornell did one Chekhov play, The Three Sisters. She was always generous in selecting her supporting casts, literally a galaxy of stars. She dared to do it. She and Tyrone Power scored with The Dark Is Light Enough on tour but failed to win audiences in New York.

Laurence Olivier was her leading man in No Time for Comedy. It was my first meeting with him and Miss Cornell introduced him affectionately as "Larry." And after, with each new role, it seems he had a new title bestowed by the Queen of England. Sir Laurence Olivier and now Lord Olivier, and acting still. In 1940, Vivien Leigh appeared with him in Romeo and Juliet.

If I were asked to name the greatest actor of my time, it would be Olivier, who has distinguished himself in his gallery of historical portraits on stage and in films. This season of 1976-77 found him acting with Sir Ralph Richardson in New York and in movies over the country.

About this time I met Judith Anderson. But it was as Medea, in 1947, an adaptation by Jeffers, costarring John Gielgud, that she received the greatest acclaim of her career. A terrifying and glorious performance! My last backstage visit with Dame Judith Anderson was after a Saturday matinee in 1970 at after a Saturday matinee in 1970 at Cleveland's Hanna Theatre, when she played Hamlet. She was the first actress to tackle the role since Sarah Bernhardt. How those well-worn lines came alive with her reading!

I had been concerned about the matter of greeting her. Would I say, "Dame Judith"? "Miss Anderson"? But when she received me, and before I could utter a word, she extended her hand, saying, "Mr. McCuen ...". I could only answer with a "Yes"!

The important event in 1946 was the visit of the Old Vic Company with Olivier and other leading players Ralph Richardson and Margaret Leighton in repertory, with Oedipus, Uncle Vanya and Henry IV.

There were many magic moments on and off Broadway within the theatre and I add these last reflections; the stunning performances



of Anne Bancroft in The Miracle Worker; Laurette Taylor in The Glass Menagerie in 1945; Julie Andrews and Rex Harrison in My Fair Lady; The Sound of Music with Mary Martin; and the classic of our time, Thornton Wilder's Our Town, which was acted without scenery and employed a narrator, and was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1938.

~~ XV ~~

IT'S OVER forty years since I conceived the idea for a Children's Theatre for Mansfield. Growing up is a ticklish business because a child is a focus of energy that is often difficult to handle. Because each child is unique, one of a kind, there is no precise place in life waiting for him. He has to find it, make his own mark and learn by experience. Each child is born with a certain amount of fantasy in his makeup, and he must be allowed and encouraged to live out this creative period.

With enthusiastic help from people involved with community players and the theatre board we were under way. Snickerty Nick and the Giant, adapted from Oscar Wilde's The Selfish Giant was the first of many such productions.

Mansfield's historic South Park was chosen as the home of the Children's Theatre, and for forty years activities of the group were centered there. This was never intended as a springboard into professional theatre, but many of the young people involved went on to become successful performers in theatre, radio and television.

Over the years we did all the childhood classics and some not so classic; from Fairy Tales to Shakespeare, from Chaucer to French Farce, from Gilbert and Sullivan to Minstrels in miniature.

One of the highlights of the seasons was *Cinderella*, a ballet pantomime choreographed by Children's Theatre students. In 1967 the the-



atre premiered Forrest Campbell's The Boy from the Bowery, a play written in the style of the Horatio Alger stories, popular a century or more ago. It was well received by audiences and critics alike and deserves to have many performances. Also it resulted in my being presented with the Alger Society Newsboy Award in 1968.

Other favorites of our audiences, composed of as many adults as children, included The Emperor's New Clothes and The Golden Touch, the adaptations by Dr. Paul T. Nolan of Midsummer Nights Dream, The Taming of the Shrew and Canterbury Tales. The Sleeping Beauty



was full of enchantment with charming sets, ballet sequences, and the music of Tchaikowsky.

A miniature version of Humperdinck's opera Hansel and Gretel was performed, and two beautiful Oriental fables came to life — Six Frogs Go A-Travelling and the Stolen Prince. One of the very early productions was Charlotte Chorpenning's Little Black Sambo, before it was renamed Ramu and the Tigers! Quite another experience was Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves. Only ten or twelve thieves showed up because of an outbreak of measles and mumps, and the play was announced as Ali Baba and the Ten Thieves.



Dicken's Christmas Carol was our holiday fare for twelve growing up years until the first Tiny Tim grew into the role of Bob Cratchit. It was fun, and in the tradition of the "Uncle Tommers." God Bless them everyone!

Evenings in the Music Hall tradition, with dramatic declamations and old songs met with great audience approval. The Minstrels in Miniature was staged with tender loving care in the manner of its period with clean stories, dances, "Lasses Trombone", songs, Irish tenor, chorus, interlocutor, premiere end-men Bones and Tambo and the circle. It played to standing room

only houses. A bit of nostalgia, now but a wonderful memory! It was good while it lasted.

Needless to say, there were many humorous happenings with the children, too numerous for recounting here and really deserving of their own book. And each contributed its bit of charm to more than forty years of memories.

Afterword

AND NOW the moment has come to take leave of the people I have mused with for so long. Yet, though I say adieu, I feel it is only a temporary leave-taking. Their lives are so linked with mine that one day in the future, I may be tempted to draw back the curtain and picture the passage of years in their various lives. It will be a grateful task to make old memories of those who formed the foreground of my life story live again.

This little book is about people and plays that I knew, or admired so extravagantly that I thought I knew them. If you miss a favorite one, I urge you to include it in your own scrapbook of theatre, a dwelling place of wonder.

The history of a theatre may be a very rich document, often reflecting popular tastes and fashions more fully than any other institution can, as did the Globe Theatre, for example, of Shakespeare's day.

It can never be recorded, the emotion that these performers arouse in our hearts, the sense of triumph they give us. They create life itself at its fullest; and in the end, they put aside the makeup and the vesture and go away into the darkness,

leaving us only a few fading photographs and old playbills and imperishable memories.

Everyone at sometime or another is an actor, and to become one, it is not necessary to set foot upon the stage. All that is needed is imagination, the desire to be someone else for the moment.

Socrates just nudged with, ". . . now the play is played and of rhetoric enough."

Tomorrow is a lovely day to write, speak, and to think about four truly magic words: Once Upon A Time.

CURTAIN



COLOPHON

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